

Claim Listing

1. (Currently Amended) A method of using a mail sorting machine to provide a transportable container containing mail that is arranged in delivery point order and separated by delivery point, wherein the mail sorting machine is capable of routing each piece of mail input therein to one of a plurality of temporary storage compartments, and wherein the transportable container includes a plurality of compartments, with each compartment of the transportable container being associated with only one of the plurality of temporary storage compartments, the method comprising:

receiving a plurality of mail pieces, wherein each mail piece in said plurality of mail pieces is addressed to a delivery point on a mail carrier's route;

associating, during a mail sorting process, each one of the plurality of temporary storage compartments with [[a]] only one delivery point on the mail carrier's route such that during the mail sorting process no two temporary storage compartments of the plurality are associated with the same delivery point;

for each mail piece in the plurality of mail pieces, determining the delivery point to which the mail piece is addressed and storing the mail piece in the temporary storage compartment associated with the determined delivery point; and

for each said temporary storage compartment, removing the mail pieces stored in said temporary storage compartment by transferring [[the]] said mail pieces stored in said temporary storage compartment to the compartment of

the transportable container with which said temporary storage compartment is associated.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of providing the transportable container to the mail carrier.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of attaching a shoulder strap to the transportable container, thereby providing a strap that makes it easier for the mail carrier to carry the transportable container.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the transportable container is expandable.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the expandable container is an accordion file.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of positioning the transportable container underneath the plurality of temporary storage compartments prior to transferring the mail from the temporary storage compartments to the transportable container.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the transferring step comprises the step of opening the bottom of each temporary storage compartment.

8. (Currently Amended) A method for delivering mail, comprising:

using a mail sorting machine to create N ~~groups~~ batches of mail, wherein each one of the N ~~groups~~ batches of mail needs to be delivered to a different delivery point, wherein N is greater than 1;

providing a temporary storage unit comprising N temporary storage compartments, wherein each one of the N batches of mail is temporarily stored in one of the N temporary storage compartments, and wherein no two of the N batches of mail are stored in the same temporary storage compartment;

providing a transportable container having N or more compartments;

for each batch of mail stored in one of said temporary storage compartments, automatically removing the batch of mail from the temporary storage compartment and placing each of the N ~~groups~~ the batch of mail into a compartment of the transportable container such that no two of the N ~~groups~~ batches of mail are placed into the same compartment of the transportable container; and

storing each of the N batches of mail in a temporary storage compartment prior to automatically placing the batches into the compartments of the transportable container, wherein no two of the N batches of mail are stored in the same temporary storage compartment;

providing the transportable container to a mail carrier, wherein the mail carrier carries the transportable container while delivering mail to delivery points on a mail route.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein each compartment of the transportable container is expandable.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the transportable container is an accordion file.

11. (Canceled).

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[11]]~~ 8, wherein the step of automatically placing ~~each of the N groups~~ a batch of mail into a compartment of the transportable container comprises the step of automatically transferring the contents of one of the temporary storage compartments into one of the compartments of the transportable container.

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of positioning said one of the compartments of the transportable container underneath ~~[[the]]~~ a floor of said one of the temporary storage compartments prior to ~~dumping~~ transferring the contents of said one of the temporary storage compartments into said one of the compartments of the transportable container.

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, wherein, prior to the step of automatically ~~dumping~~ transferring the contents of said one of the temporary storage compartments into one of the compartments of the transportable container, the method comprises the step of automatically opening the floor of said one of the temporary storage compartments.

15. (Original) A mail sorting system, comprising:

a mail sorter that sorts mail;

a plurality of temporary storage compartments, each of said plurality of temporary storage compartments being able to receive and store mail that has been sorted by the mail sorter; and

a transportable, expandable container, the transportable, expandable container comprising a plurality of expandable compartments, wherein

each said expandable compartment is associated with one of the plurality of temporary storage compartments such that no two of said expandable compartments is associated with the same temporary storage compartment.

16. (Original) The mail sorting system of claim 15, wherein the expandable container is flexible.

17. (Original) The mail sorting system of claim 15, wherein an opening of each said expandable compartment is positioned underneath one of the temporary storage compartments.

18. (Original) The mail sorting system of claim 17, wherein an angle between a side wall of a temporary storage compartment and a corresponding side wall of the expandable compartment that is associated with said temporary storage compartment is greater than 90 degrees but less than about 135 degrees.

19. (Original) The mail sorting system of claim 18, wherein each of said temporary storage compartments has an openable floor.

20. (Original) The mail sorting system of claim 19, wherein the openable floor is a hinged floor.

21. (New) The mail sorting system of claim 15, wherein, during a mail sorting process, each one of the plurality of temporary storage compartments is associated with only one delivery point on the mail carrier's route such that during the mail sorting process no two temporary storage compartments of the plurality are associated with the same delivery point.

22. (New) A method of using a mail sorting machine to provide a transportable container containing mail that is arranged in delivery point order and separated by delivery point, wherein the mail sorting machine is capable of routing each piece of mail input therein to one of a plurality of temporary storage compartments, and wherein the transportable container includes a plurality of compartments, with each compartment of the transportable container being associated with one of the plurality of temporary storage compartments, the method comprising:

receiving a plurality of mail pieces, wherein each mail piece in said plurality of mail pieces is addressed to a delivery point on a mail carrier's route;

associating each one of the plurality of temporary storage compartments with a delivery point on the mail carrier's route such that no two temporary storage

compartments of the plurality are associated with the same delivery point;

for each mail piece in the plurality of mail pieces, determining the delivery point to which the mail piece is addressed and storing the mail piece in the temporary storage compartment associated with the determined delivery point;

for each said temporary storage compartment, transferring the mail pieces stored in said temporary storage compartment to the compartment of the transportable container with which said temporary storage compartment is associated; and

positioning the transportable container underneath the plurality of temporary storage compartments prior to transferring the mail from the temporary storage compartments to the transportable container.

23. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the transferring step comprises the step of opening the bottom of each temporary storage compartment.

24. (New) A mail sorting system, comprising:

a mail sorter that sorts mail;

a plurality of temporary storage compartments, each of said plurality of temporary storage compartments being able to receive and store mail that has been sorted by the mail sorter; and

a transportable, expandable container, the transportable, expandable container comprising a plurality of expandable compartments, wherein

each said expandable compartment is associated with one of the plurality of temporary storage compartments such that no two of said expandable compartments is associated with the same temporary storage compartment, and

an opening of each said expandable compartment is positioned underneath one of the temporary storage compartments.

25. (New) The mail sorting system of claim 24, wherein an angle between a side wall of a temporary storage compartment and a corresponding side wall of the expandable compartment that is associated with said temporary storage compartment is greater than 90 degrees but less than about 135 degrees.

26. (New) The mail sorting system of claim 25, wherein each of said temporary storage compartments has an openable floor.

27. (New) The mail sorting system of claim 26, wherein the openable floor is a hinged floor.